

# IOWA BIRD LIFE

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Winter 1986

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IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

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The IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION, founded in 1923, encourages interest in the identification, study, and protection of birds in Iowa and seeks to unite those who have these interests in common. *IOWA BIRD LIFE* and *I.O.U. NEWS* are quarterly publications of the Union.

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**SUBSCRIPTION/MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION:** Institutions may subscribe to *Iowa Bird Life* for \$12 per year. Individuals may join the Iowa Ornithologists' Union according to the following membership classes: Regular (\$12); Regular as spouse or minor child of another Regular member without publications (\$4 first additional family member, \$2 each additional family member); Contributing (\$12 plus any additional tax-deductible contribution to the IOU); and Life (\$250 as single payment or \$62.50 for each of four years). Members but not subscribers will also receive the quarterly *I.O.U. NEWS* and are eligible to vote and hold office in the Union. Send subscriptions, membership payments, or address changes to Hank Zaletel, Treasurer, 715 West St., Colo, IA 50056.

**INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS:** Original manuscripts, notes, letters (indicate if for publication), editorials, and other materials relating to birds and bird finding in Iowa should be sent to the editor. Accepted manuscripts will generally be published promptly, depending on space available, with the following absolute deadlines: 15 November for the Winter issue; 15 February for the Spring issue; 15 May for the Summer issue; and 15 July for the Fall issue. Most manuscripts will be refereed. All material should be typed double-spaced or hand-printed in ink on 8½ x 11 inch paper. Authors should pattern their style after a current issue of the journal. If you want more detailed guidelines or advice regarding the appropriateness of your topic for *Iowa Bird Life*, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to the editor.

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## UPCOMING MEETINGS OF IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

May 17-18, 1986, Springbrook State Park

**FIELD REPORTS:** Anyone observing birds in Iowa is encouraged to report their findings on a quarterly basis to the Field Reports editors. Sample reporting and documentation forms suitable for duplication are available from the editor (send self-addressed stamped envelope to T. H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52240). An article describing the reporting process is also available.

Deadlines for receipt of field reports are as follows:

Winter (Dec, Jan, Feb)—3 March (W. Ross Silcock, Box 300, Tabor, IA 51653)

Spring (Mar, Apr, May)—3 June (Robert K. Myers, RR2 Box 153, Perry, IA 50220)

Summer (Jun, Jul)—3 August (James J. Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50010)

Fall (Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov)—3 December (Carl J. Bendorf, 825 7th Ave, Iowa City, IA 52240)

## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Deadline for receipt of reports: 15 January

For forms and instructions write: W. Ross Silcock, Box 300, Tabor, IA 51653.

## IOWA BIRDLINE 319-622-3353

The birdline is a two to three minute recorded summary of interesting recent bird sightings in Iowa. At the end of the report you can leave a message and report your recent sightings. Be sure to give your name and phone number as well as the location of the bird and date seen. Call in as soon as possible after sighting a rare bird. Carl Bendorf checks the reports daily and updates the recording on Monday, so make sure Sunday sightings are reported by Sunday night.

## I.O.U. NEWS

Send items of interest for the newsletter to the editors (J. Hank and Linda Zaletel, 715 West St., Colo, IA 50056).

## MATERIALS AVAILABLE

Back issues of *Iowa Bird Life*—send self-addressed stamped envelope to the Editor of Iowa Bird Life for order form (one is included with this issue).

## REPORTING NEBRASKA BIRDS

Sightings of Nebraska birds, including those within the Nebraska portion of DeSoto NWR, should be reported to Loren and Babs Padelford, 1405 Little John Road, Bellevue, NE 68005. Formats for reporting and documentation are the same as for Iowa.

# EDITORIAL

THOMAS H. KENT

WITH THIS ISSUE, *Iowa Bird Life* begins its 56th year and introduces its third editor. *Iowa Bird Life*, the official journal of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union, was conceived in 1931 with Fred Pierce as editor. Much of Fred's pioneering efforts remain part of the journal today. After 30 years of his meticulous effort, the heavy burden of editorship was passed to Peter C. Petersen, who continued for 25 years. Pete introduced a firmer, color-coded cover, added a section of the journal for summarizing the field reports of observers across the state, and guided the journal through a period of considerable growth. We owe Fred and Pete much gratitude for the tireless hours spent in maintaining a high quality journal over so many years.

With a strong past to build on, we hope to add some new dimensions to the journal, many of which are displayed in the current issue. The most important change, however, is the expansion of the editorial staff. We anticipate that the staff will change from time to time, and invite anyone interested in helping to contact the editor. Jim Sandroek will serve as Associate Editor. In addition to his involvement in planning, he will coordinate the articles on birding locations and book reviews. Carl Bendorf will handle circulation—keeping track of members and subscribers, producing mailing labels, and sending out the journal. The Field Reports editors (Ross Silcock, Jim Dinsmore, Carl Bendorf, and Bob Myers) will not only continue the Field Reports in their present form, but will also solicit and edit articles and notes on rarities that occur during their reporting periods.

You will notice some style changes in the journal. We owe Norman Sage thanks for his expert advice on layout, typography, printing, and copy editing. Much of the typing will be done by the editorial staff, contributors, and volunteers on personal computers, thus reducing the costs of an expensive step in the publications process and allowing manuscripts to be processed and reviewed by the authors on a continuing basis. The typography (typesetting and page layout) and printing were bid separately based on specifications developed by Norman Sage. We hope you find the results pleasing.

The covers will be used for standard information so that you can find the information at the same location in each issue. Each front cover will display a different photograph. Cover photographs will be selected to illustrate important bird findings in Iowa, to call attention to an article in the journal, or to beautifully illustrate an Iowa bird. We invite members to contribute photographs for possible use on the cover or elsewhere in the journal. Please include a self-addressed envelope if you want the photographs returned; otherwise, we will assume that they have been contributed to the I.O.U. photo collection. Color coding of the issues will continue using colored ink instead of colored paper. The placement of a color bar on the folded edge will be an indication of the year within a 5-year set.

The content will be expanded to 32 pages per issue (not including cover) with regular feature articles on a birder, a birding location, an identification problem, field reports, and rare sightings. Articles of general interest and scientific papers will continue to be an important component of the journal. Other less regular features will include Christmas Bird Counts and other surveys, quizzes, book reviews, information of interest, letters to the editor, editorials, and official reports of the Union. We particularly invite guest editorials and letters addressing specific issues of ornithological interest.

Most of the material in the journal will undergo peer review, and the editors will make alterations to conform to the style of the journal. Authors will receive confirmation of receipt of manuscripts, notification of acceptance or rejection, and computer-typed copy to review prior to publication. We will be soliciting manuscripts from members on various subjects. But don't wait—send your articles on Iowa birds to *Iowa Bird Life*. If you have an idea for an article and want to bounce it off the editor, write me.

*Iowa Bird Life* belongs to the members of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union. Your contributions and suggestions will be a major factor in shaping the content of the journal.

Good birding in 1986!

## MEET AN IOWA ORNITHOLOGIST

PETER C. PETERSEN

ANN M. BARKER

Sliding down an icy gravel incline, the Mercedes sedan came to an ominous halt, mired in chunky slush in the pit of a little-used and poorly graded underpass. Its driver, after an unsuccessful attempt to proceed in either direction, climbed out to survey the situation. In water up to his knees, muttering about territory and schedules, he trudged off to find a friendly farmer with a tractor to come to the rescue. It was January 1982 on the Clinton Christmas Bird Count. The Mercedes and its owner, Peter C. Petersen, are well known to Iowa birders; he has been a mainstay of Iowa birding and the Iowa Ornithologists' Union since the 1950s.

Pete has worked full time as an ornithologist in the Quad City area for the past 15 years. At present he wears several ornithological hats, being active as an educator, researcher, author, editor, and entrepreneur. He is known to I.O.U. members as one of the state's top birders; as owner of the Petersen Book Company, specializing in natural history books; as co-author of *Iowa Birds* (Dinsmore et al. 1984); and as editor of *Iowa Bird Life* for the past 25 years. He is Ornithologist for the Deere-Wiman House in Moline, where his activities include programs and classes on birds co-sponsored by the Davenport, Moline, and Rock Island Parks and Recreation Department and managing an extensive natural history library. He also teaches classes on Bird Identification and Beginning Ornithology for the Scott Community College.

His current research projects include two studies for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to assess the effect on birds of dredge spoil sites and clear-cut areas. A third Corps project, recently completed, involved an aerial census of Bald Eagles along the Iowa shore of the Mississippi River to plot roosting areas and identify areas of open water. For the Iowa-Illinois Gas and Electric Company, he has completed a three year survey of bird populations on the Big Sand Mound Nature Preserve near Muscatine. He is a veteran of 81 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Breeding Bird Surveys, for which he serves as state coordinator, and an amazing 167 Christmas Bird Counts; he is the compiler for five counts each year, three of which he helped initiate during the late 1950s and 1960s.



*Waiting for Rosy Finch at Oelwein, March 1978.*

Finally, he is owner of Pete Petersen's Wild Bird Shop in the Village of East Davenport; the shop sells feeders, birdseed, and other supplies and gives advice on bird feeding and information on birds, as well as serving as an outlet for the Petersen Book Company.

An only child, Pete was born on 10 December 1936 to Paula and Peter C. Petersen. His early interest in birds was stimulated by his mother, an active I.O.U. member with an avid interest in nature, especially flowers and birds. That early interest was perhaps honed by a quirk of fate. When Pete was three and one half years old, his leg was run over by a car. It was a severe injury; one that would require major bone grafting two years later. He spent those two years in casts and braces. After the surgery, although one leg was shorter than the other, he was able to walk normally and had only one restriction: he could not participate in contact sports. As a result, birding was one of the few activities still available to him and received a good deal of his attention.

He attended bird classes offered at the Davenport Public Museum by its director, ornithologist Fred Hall, who emphasized a scientific approach to the study of birds, and who had a significant influence on the manner in which Pete was to pursue his interest. Hall's influence was also felt by some of Pete's early friends, all of whom are still active birders today. These friends included Norwood Hazard, now a biologist and science consultant for a California school system; Tom Kent of Iowa City, now editor of *Iowa Bird Life* and co-author of *Iowa Birds*; Clark Ehlers of Davenport; and Louis Blevins of Davenport, a close friend and birding companion since college days. Blevin's sons Brian and Corey are now birding companions and godsons of the Petersens.

In high school, Pete excelled in mathematics and was encouraged by counselors and teachers to study engineering. But his uncle, an engineer himself, told Pete, "You don't have enough interest in any of the engineering fields to be really happy. Why don't you stay with bird study, major in zoology, and do what you really like?"

It was this advice that Pete took, obtaining a Bachelor of Science degree in 1958 from Iowa State University, with a major in zoology and minors in botany and education.

Upon his graduation from college, Pete was offered a job with the Davenport Public Museum working with the natural history collections and the educational program. After four years, with the collections catalogued and the building closed due to unsafe conditions, the job ended temporarily.

It was during this time that he met his wife-to-be, Mary Lou Petersen (who conveniently saved a name change when they were later married). Mary Lou had been a biology student at Iowa State Teachers College in Cedar Falls and had met Pete on field trips she took as part of her required classes. After she received her degree, she came to the Quad Cities to teach in the fall of 1961. Pete confesses that she was not impressed when, on their first date, his MG broke down, requiring her to use her own car to help him get to the repair garage. Those early differences resolved, they were married in 1962. Mary Lou teaches chemistry and earth science at Blackhawk Junior High School in Le Claire. She is an excellent birder and has taught an extra-curricular bird class for her junior high students. She has been active in the I.O.U. and served as its secretary for eleven years.

After the museum closed, Pete was employed in non-ornithological positions for the next eight years, working in managerial positions for a cracker and a chemical company. In 1970 the Davenport Public Museum was reopened and hired Pete as its Director of Education, a position he held for ten years. In 1980 he began working as Deere Wiman Ornithologist on a part-time basis. At about the same time, he and Mary Lou were given the opportunity to buy the Pierce Book Company, a mail order firm specializing in natural history and bird books, which had been founded by Fred Pierce, editor of *Iowa Bird Life* from 1931 to 1960. Pete maintains a personal ornithological library of over 3,000 volumes. Another opportunity presented itself in October 1982 when, with partner Larry Linder, he opened Pete Petersen's Wild Bird Shop.

Pete and Mary Lou have traveled the world in search of birds. They began their travels in 1969 with a trip to Brazil. This was followed by trips to Trinidad in 1971 and Columbia in 1973. In 1974, the Ornithological Congress met in Australia; enroute to the meeting the Petersens birded Hawaii with Chandler Robbins and took side trips to Tahiti and Fiji. During the next four years, they took several trips around the United States. In 1978, following the Ornithological Congress in Berlin, they spent a week each in Spain, Hungary, and Romania, as well as a few days in England. In 1980 Pete guided a tour for the museum to Guatemala; he also went on a tour to Peru. He traveled to southeast Asia in 1982, and in 1985 took a five-week African trip to Cameroon and Kenya. He plans a June 1986 trip to the Ornithological Congress in Ottawa, preceded by a trip north to Bylot Island in Baffin Bay.

Pete's life list stands currently at 3,073 species, placing him among the top birders in the world. His North American list includes 615 species. He tops Iowa listers with 324 species.

Pete has a special interest in banding birds; he has been one of the state's most active banders for many years. After college, he decided on banding as a project because he thought it was a way to make a more concrete contribution to ornithology than the simple collection of observational data. He has banded over 100,000 birds, most at Pine Hill Cemetery in Davenport. He recently completed a 20-year migration study at Pine Hill in which he studied the effect of habitat succession on preferences of migratory species.

Since 1958 Pete has been a life member of the Wilson Ornithological Society, the



Cooper Ornithological Society, and the American Ornithologists' Union. Both he and Mary Lou are life members of the American Birding Association. His involvement with the Iowa Ornithologists' Union began when he joined in 1952 at age 16. In 1959 he was elected Vice-president, and in 1960, President. He was Editor of *Iowa Bird Life* from 1961 to 1985. Living near the Illinois border, he has also been active in the Illinois Audubon Society, serving as its president from 1972 to 1975, the only president to serve while not living in Illinois. He served as vice-president of Inland Bird Banding in the 1960s and early 1970s, and as president of the Quad City Audubon Society in 1976.

His publications, in addition to *Iowa Birds*, include *A Field List of Birds of the Quad City Region* (Petersen and Fawks 1977) and *Birding Areas of Iowa* (Petersen 1979), the latter a compilation of articles from *Iowa Bird Life* that he edited. He was also editor of the Middlewestern Prairie Region field notes for *American Birds* for nine years during the 1960s.

Pete's efforts in the area of conservation have been recognized: he received the "Conservationist of the Year" award from the Illinois Audubon Society in 1972 and the "Award for Conservation Achievement" from the Davenport Chapter of the Izaak Walton League in 1980. Mary Lou received the latter award in 1985.

Pete's goals for the future include publishing his wealth of banding data in a useful and easily retrievable form and adding to his world life list.

One of Pete's greatest contributions has been the community interest he has generated, not only in birds, but in broader issues such as conservation. And while he may seem a little impetuous behind the wheel of his Mercedes, he has infinite patience with any and all questions that come his way from students and others whose interest he has stimulated. He encourages the same scientific approach taught him by Fred Hall, urging anyone interested to contribute in some small way. There are many local birders who, were it not for that patience and encouragement, might never have developed more than a superficial passing interest. They are truly grateful.

## LITERATURE CITED

- Dinsmore, J. J., T. H. Kent, D. Koenig, P. C. Petersen, and D. M. Roosa. 1984. *Iowa Birds*. Ames: Iowa State University Press.  
 Petersen, P. C. 1979. *Birding Areas of Iowa*. Iowa Ornithologists' Union.  
 Petersen, P. C., and E. Fawks. 1977. *A Field List of Birds of the Quad City Region*. Davenport: Quad City Audubon Society.

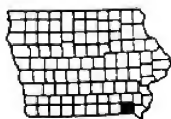
R.R. 3, Box 190, Davenport, IA 52804

*Checking the list at spring I.O.U. meeting, Marshalltown 1985.*



# BIRDING LACEY-KEOSAUQUA STATE PARK

JAMES P. SANDROCK



Lacey-Keosauqua State Park is one of the oldest and largest (1,653 acres) parks in the Iowa system. Located in Van Buren County in extreme southeast Iowa and just across the Des Moines River from the county seat of Keosauqua, it and the immediately adjoining areas comprise one of the state's birding hot spots. Especially productive for warblers in both spring and fall, the area provides all the vireos and most of the flycatchers, woodpeckers, thrushes, and Mimidae on the Iowa Field Checklist. Raptors are abundant, and waterfowl and shorebirds can surprise you when the river is low and sandbars emerge. Wild Turkey abounds and can be seen throughout the park.

The habitats consist mostly of deciduous trees, many of them over 200 years old, second growth forest, herbaceous plants, ferns, shrubs of all varieties, and wild flowers galore. There are many well-maintained nature trails which are easily negotiated. The great horseshoe bend of the Des Moines River extends for two miles along the border of the park, and an artificial lake within the preserve attracts many species of birds. A nature trail through dense woods surrounding the lake is usually not very productive for many species of birds.

In this guide to birding Lacey-Keosauqua State Park and the immediate area, I will describe specific locations and the birds that you can expect to see there in season. Many of the specific birds cited here are summer residents that are rare to uncommon in most areas of the state. I have seen 166 species in the park and vicinity in the last five years of intensive birding.

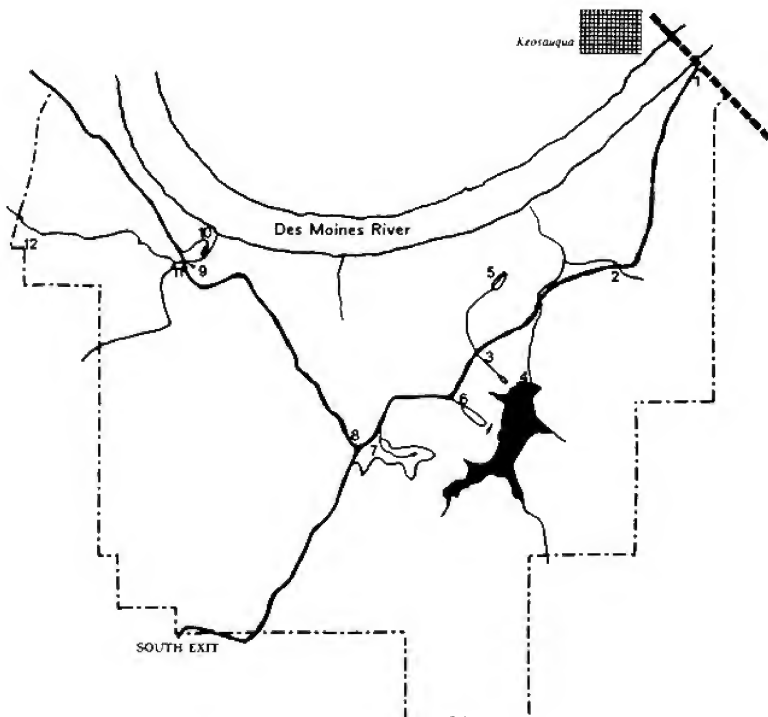
From the main entrance (map location 1) drive to the first creek that crosses the road. A small graveled area (2) on the left is a good place to stop to listen for warblers, especially Northern Parula, Cerulean, and Kentucky. Worm-eating Warbler has been seen on the far bank of the creek.

Continue into the park; turn left at the DOCK sign (3) and drive down to the dock area, which overlooks the lake. Scan the trees and shrubs for Northern and Orchard Oriole, Scarlet (and perhaps Summer) Tanager, flycatchers, and, of course, warblers. Louisiana Waterthrush may be seen at the edge of the lake's inlets. A walk across the dike (4) may be profitable. You will see several species of swallows over the lake, and raptors, including Bald Eagles, may be perched in the trees around the lake in season.

Return to the main road; cross it and proceed to the picnic area (5) which may be quite productive. Watch especially for Wild Turkey.

After returning to the main road, turn right and proceed to the BEACH sign (6). Turn left, park, and check out this area for sparrows, titmice, and thrushes. Back on the main road, turn left and drive to the camp ground (7). Park near the intersection at the stop sign (8). The camp ground and the trees along the gravel road near the stop sign should be scanned carefully for Summer Tanager, which is more often heard than seen. You may have to work hard for this species, but I have seen it most often in this area in spring, summer, and fall. Look also for sparrows, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Rufous-sided Towhee, Eastern Bluebird, Cedar Waxwing, kinglets, cuckoos, and the ubiquitous warblers.

Follow the main road down the hill opposite the camp ground; drive slowly and keep eyes and ears open for Ovenbird, Kentucky Warbler, and thrushes. At the bot-



tom of the hill, you will come upon a stone bridge (9) which is a good place from which to bird. The huge sycamore trees arching over the creek have contained up to eight Yellow-throated Warblers, a species for which the park is especially noted. Northern Parula, Cerulean Warbler, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, and Acadian Flycatcher are also star attractions here. Louisiana Waterthrushes are often found in and around the creek bed. Yellow-throated Warbler, Northern Parula, and Louisiana Waterthrush arrive early here, usually by mid-April. Cerulean Warbler and Acadian Flycatcher may arrive in late April or early May, earlier than in other areas of the state.

Using the bridge as a center of your birding activity in this area of the park, you may expect to see within easy walking distance, many species of birds. (In this area, I have seen every species of warbler on the checklist except Black-throated Blue, Prairie, and Hooded; all vireos; all flycatchers except Willow; and all woodpeckers except Pileated).

Ely Ford (10)—you will see the sign from the bridge—is the single most productive area in the park. The old sycamore trees along the creek, as well as the younger ones planted in the open area, provide excellent opportunities to observe Yellow-throated Warbler at close range. Warbling Vireo and other vireos are frequent here also. Be sure to scan the river from the bank for all species of swallows. Nature trails at each end of Ely Ford follow the river; these are worth checking out.

Return to the stone bridge, from which you will see a gravel road (11) paralleling the creek. This road leads under high trees where Cerulean Warbler is frequent—look high! Passing under the trees, you will see a large open area—the old Indian camp—on your left. The shrubs surrounding this area often reveal migrant Mourning Warbler, as well as other warblers. Continue on the road, past the log bar-

rier, into the woods; the creek will always be on your right. Once in the wooded area, listen for Kentucky Warbler and migrant Prothonotary Warbler. Acadian and possibly Alder Flycatcher can be heard and seen in the shrubs on your right. Follow the road (keeping an eye and ear on the big sycamores for Yellow-throated Warbler) for approximately 100 yards to the confluence of creeks. From this spot, in the triangular area across the creek, you may see warblers, vireos, thrushes, flycatchers, woodpeckers, and other passerines. On rare occasions I have seen several species of wrens here.

If you have time, cross the small ravine (slippery when wet) and continue along the path. When you come to the white, wooden barrier (12), which signifies the limit of the park and the beginning of the wildlife refuge, you will see a large path ascending the hill on your left. At the top of the hill (a rather steep climb) listen for Worm-eating Warbler. If there, this species is usually high in the trees! Scarlet Tanager is often here also.

Back on the path at the barrier, continue to walk into the refuge—be careful during hunting season! You can follow this path for about one-half mile; it is an easy walk, during which you will cross the creek with no difficulty. Listen the whole distance for White-eyed Vireo, flycatchers, and warblers. You will eventually arrive at a large slash in the forest. The high tension wires above the slash will be obvious. Here you will find Blue-winged Warbler and Yellow-breasted Chat, as well as other edge birds.

Return to the stone bridge, walking the creek bed during the dry season, if you wish. If you have followed these directions, you will have spent three to four hours in the best birding locations in the park and refuge.

To explore other areas outside the park, drive back up the hill to the camp ground. Turn right at the stop sign; the gravel road here is the South Exit from the park. Continue on this road to the first stop sign. Turn right and continue to turn right at each optional turn. Listen and look for Grasshopper Sparrow, Loggerhead Shrike, raptors, and Wild Turkey. As you drive you will see farmland on your left and the Keosauqua Unit of Shimek Forest on your right. When you pass the sign indicating that you are leaving Shimek Forest, you will descend a hill. About one-half way down the hill you will see a grove of trees in the field on your left. Stop near this field at the telephone pole marked with the number 40. Scan the grove and fields for Northern Mockingbird, Yellow-breasted Chat, Eastern Bluebird, and sparrows in migration (Lark, Harris', Vesper). Bell's Vireo nests in shrubs further down the hill.

At the bottom of the hill, turn right, and continue to the paved road. Turn right to return to Keosauqua.

While birding Lacey-Keosauqua State Park, be alert for mammals including white-tailed deer, raccoon, opossum, red fox, bobcat, and coyote.

*1634 Morningside Dr., Iowa City, IA 52240*

# IDENTIFICATION OF IMMATURE SWANS

BRUCE PETERJOHN

Efforts to reintroduce Trumpeter Swans (*Cygnus buccinator*) have complicated the identification of wintering swans in the Midwest. Immature swans are particularly difficult to identify. The standard field guides offer little assistance, because the differences in size and neck curvature that they emphasize may not be apparent on solitary birds. In the past young birds could be identified by the adults they were with, but now young trumpeters are being placed in nests of Mute Swans (*C. olor*) in Ontario. This article provides an approach to the identification of first year Tundra (*C. columbianus*), Mute, and Trumpeter Swans.

The Mute Swan has two color morphs determined by a sex-linked gene. The adults differ only in leg color (black in the typical morph and brown in the less common white or Polish morph). The immatures are readily separable since Polish swans are entirely white from the time of hatching, while the typical morph is washed with brown throughout the first year. An all white swan with an immature bill is a white phase Mute Swan.

All three swan species undergo a similar molt sequence. Fall immatures arrive in juvenal plumage and molt into first basic plumage during winter and early spring. (After the first year, swans reach adult plumage and molt only once a year.) Immature Tundra Swans tend to molt earlier than the other species, providing a useful clue to the identification of mid-winter birds.

During the fall, when all three species have a uniformly brownish juvenal plumage, Mute Swans can be distinguished by their uniformly gray bills. Tundra and Trumpeter Swans both have dirty pink to reddish-pink bills with black tips. If the two species were together, the larger size of the trumpeter would be obvious. Otherwise, a solitary trumpeter would have to be identified by the flat bill and forehead profile and broad black facial skin where it meets the eye; tundras have rounded foreheads and narrow facial skin.

By January, most Tundra Swans have completed their first basic molt and have much whiter backs and wings than the other two species. While many Mute and Trumpeter Swans become lighter by mid-winter, they normally retain many brown feathers on the wings and back throughout the first year, although worn individuals can become fairly white by spring.

Bill colors also change during the winter. Mute Swans, in a period of a few weeks, acquire a pink or orange-pink bill that is similar to adults except for the absence of a black knob at the base. The bill color of Tundra and Trumpeter Swans changes much more gradually, darkening from dusky pink to gray mottled with pink to black. It is not unusual to observe immatures of these two species with some pink mottling on the bill during spring migration. In any event, mid-winter immature swans with white backs and wings will be Tundra Swans. Mute Swans will have some brown feathers in the upperparts with pinkish bills, while Trumpeter Swans generally have even darker upperparts and bill colors similar to Tundra Swans. In addition, the characteristic head shape and broad black facial skin of Trumpeter Swans is a useful clue.

Identification of immature swans is most difficult in mid-winter, because timing of molts is variable among the species and within individuals of each species. Swans with intermediate bill colors and mixed brown and white upperparts pose the most



*Immature Mute Swan near Webb, Clay County, April 1985. Note straight neck (other photos showed it held in curved position) and light color (orange-yellow) of middle part of bill. Photos by The Laurens Sun (left) and Eldon Kanago (right).*



*Immature Mute Swan at Cedar Rapids, 31 December 1985. Note how front and back lighting create quite different appearances in the same bird. Photos by T. H. Kent.*

difficult problems. In lingering winter birds it is useful to watch for changes in bill and body coloration.

By spring, the three species should be readily separable in the field. Only Mute Swans have pink bills. Both Tundra and Trumpeter Swans have mostly black bills; however, the backs and wings will be white in tundras and washed with brown in trumpeters. Head shape and facial skin differences will also be evident.

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# THE 1985 IOWA FEEDER SURVEY

RICHARD J. HOLLIS

The second annual Iowa Feeder Survey was conducted on 19 and 20 January 1985. Data was received from 922 feeders. Although the results were generally similar to the 1984 survey (Hollis 1985), some differences were noted. This year's survey also provides information on urban and rural distribution of feeder birds.

## METHODS

The survey was designed and forms were distributed in a manner similar to the 1984 survey. The Iowa Conservation Commission, through the State Nongame Biologist, Doug Reeves, provided the printing and distribution of most of the forms. The editors of numerous club newsletters distributed forms to their members. Some mailing deadlines were not reached, so the number of clubs distributing forms was lower than in 1984. This is one cause of the decreased return—922, down from 1,754 in 1984. The geographic distribution of feeders was similar in both years. No reports were received from some western counties.

Completed forms were sorted according to the same rules as last year. Data was entered into computer files using data management programs and much of the analysis was performed by computer.

Throughout this paper, the word feeder is used to refer to the household location of one or more bird feeders including nearby trees and the ground under feeders. The number of individual feeders ranged from one to greater than ten. The significance of differences between means and proportions (i. e., the percent feeders reporting a species) was calculated using a simple, one-tailed Z-test. To calculate statistical significance of differences between the 1985 and 1984 means, it was assumed that the standard deviation for 1984 data was the same as for the 1985 data. As in 1984, the two major calculations used in the study were the percent of feeders reporting the species and the mean number of birds per feeder from feeders that reported the species. One new question was asked and analyzed: Is your feeder in town or in the country? No attempt was made this year to further define urban and rural habitats.

Weather information, provided by State Climatologist Paul Waite, indicated that the weekend of the survey, 19 and 20 January 1985, was windy and cold, with wind chills reaching -65 F in the SW to -85 NW. Prior to the survey, October 1984 was very wet, but temperatures through December were nearly normal on the average. Temperature fluctuations in December were frequent and extreme, causing some respiratory problems for livestock. January 1985 was windy and cold. During the period leading up to the 1984 survey, October and November were cloudy and wet with near normal temperatures. December 1984 was the coldest and third snowiest since 1887 when records were first kept. This was followed by a relatively normal January.

## RESULTS

*Comparison with 1984:* There were no apparent differences in the regional distribution of species (data not shown, but available upon request). Table 1 shows the percent of feeders reporting the species and mean birds per feeder for 1984 and 1985.

Table 1. Species Commonly Found at Feeders in 1984 and 1985

Species	% of Feeders*		Mean Per Feeder*	
	1984	1985	1984	1985
Ring-necked Pheasant	3.0 *	4.7	5.4	4.4
Rock Dove	6.6	7.1	5.4	6.4
Mourning Dove	13.0	13.8	4.6	5.7
Red-headed Woodpecker	21.8 *	13.1	1.6	1.8
Red-bellied Woodpecker	35.2 *	30.0	1.3	1.4
Downy Woodpecker	61.4	59.9	2.0	2.0
Hairy Woodpecker	30.7	28.5	1.6	1.6
Northern Flicker	18.4	17.7	1.3	1.4
Blue Jay	84.6	82.7	3.9	3.8
American Crow	5.7 *	15.2	3.6	3.7
Black-capped Chickadee	81.8 *	78.2	4.4	4.3
Tufted Titmouse	22.2+	21.0	2.7	2.6
Red-breasted Nuthatch	9.9 *	4.5	1.5	1.7
White-breasted Nuthatch	59.7 *	51.2	2.2	2.2
Brown Creeper	3.9	3.8	1.3	1.5
American Robin	0.7 *	2.2	3.6 *	1.4
Cedar Waxwing	7.1 *	2.2	17.0 *	6.9
European Starling ++	58.9	60.4	7.1	7.4
Northern Cardinal	83.3	81.1	6.0	5.3
American Tree Sparrow	30.2 *	38.3	7.1	7.3
Song Sparrow	13.7	11.5	4.8	5.6
White-throated Sparrow	7.3	5.4	3.9	3.1
White-crowned Sparrow	5.5	4.3	3.1	5.0
Harris' Sparrow	2.9 *	6.4	2.8	4.2
Dark-eyed Junco	88.7	87.1	9.0	8.7
Red-winged Blackbird	2.4	2.5	4.9	5.0
Common Grackle	4.3 *	12.9	3.3	4.5
Brown-headed Cowbird	3.6	3.6	5.4	5.6
Purple Finch	34.8 *	19.1	7.3 *	5.2
Common Redpoll	4.3	3.5	2.9	2.9
Pine Siskin	15.4 *	20.4	4.8	4.9
American Goldfinch	72.9	71.6	14.5 *	11.3
Evening Grosbeak	5.3 *	0.2	8.1	3.5
House Sparrow ++	77.4	79.5	22.7	22.6

\* significantly different,  $p < 0.05$ ; means for feeders with the species.

+ erroneously listed as 0.22 % in the 1984 survey.

++ approximation, some stations failed to report these species.

Only a few species show significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ).

The following species were found at a higher percentage of feeders (statewide) in 1985: Ring-necked Pheasant, American Crow, American Robin, American Tree Sparrow, Harris' Sparrow, Common Grackle, and Pine Siskin. Some species were seen at fewer feeders in 1985: Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Cedar Waxwing, Purple Finch, and Evening Grosbeak.

The following species were present in lower numbers in 1985: American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, Purple Finch, and American Goldfinch. No species were found in significantly higher numbers in 1985.

*Rarities:* As in 1984, several species were found infrequently. Some of these, such as Wild Turkey, Northern Bobwhite, or Lapland Longspurs are unexpected at feeders. A few of the species reported were considered to be possibly or likely misidentified, such as Chipping Sparrows (more likely American Tree Sparrows) or a flock of 30 Black Phoebe (more likely Dark-eyed Juncos). Table 2 lists some of the most signifi-



Table 2. Some Rare Species Reported in 1985 and 1984

Species	Number of Birds/Feeders		County Location
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker			
1985	3	3	Iowa, Linn, Marshall
1984	8	8	Adams, Carroll, Decatur, Johnson, Linn, Marshall, Polk, Scott
Carolina Wren			
1984	5	4	Dubuque, Johnson(2), Linn
Golden-crowned Kinglet			
1985	1	1	Decatur
1984	1	1	Scott
Varied Thrush			
1984	1	1	Scott
Brown Thrasher			
1985	5	5	Linn, Scott (2), Story, Webster
1984	9	9	Black Hawk, Cass, Cerro Gordo, Howard, Muscatine, Mitchell, Story, Polk(2)
Rufous-sided Towhee			
1985	1	1	Johnson
1984	8	7	Allamakee, Clinton, Dallas, Lee, Mills, Polk, Wayne
Fox Sparrow			
1985	3	3	Cedar, Lee, Linn
1984	17	11	Black Hawk(2), Carroll, Cerro Gordo, Hamilton, Howard, Lee, Sac, Scott(2), Dubuque.
Rusty Blackbird.			
1985	1	1	Benton
1984	2	2	Wright, Dallas
Northern Oriole			
1985	1	1	Cass
House Finch			
1985	6	4	Dubuque, Lee(2), Monroe
1984	3	1	Iowa

cant rare birds. Four species stand out. Carolina Wrens appear down. It had been thought that the population of this species in Iowa was starting to recover from its decline in the mid-1970s. The feeder survey suggests that this trend was reversed in 1985, perhaps due to the severe weather in the two winters preceding the 1985 survey—specifically December 1983 and January 1985. Rufous-sided Towhees and Fox Sparrows also appear to be less frequent. The number of House Finches was up, compared with 1984, but this difference is not significant, and none of these birds were documented or reported to the Field Reports editor. Even so, it is expected that House Finches will increase in the state as they have to the east of Iowa.

*Urban and Rural Species:* Each species was examined in each region, to see if the percent of feeders reporting the species differed at urban or rural feeders. Table 3 lists those species which were found more often at either urban or rural feeders. In many instances the differences were significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). In some regions, for some species, the frequencies at urban and rural feeders were nearly equal. For some species, the numbers were too small for adequate evaluation. For example, although 14 of the 20 American Robin reports (statewide) were from feeders located in urban areas, this is not enough feeders for evaluation.

Table 3. Species with Urban or Rural Predominance as Judged by Percent of Feeders Reporting the Species in Each of Nine Regions

Species	Urban(*)	Same	Rural(*)	Too Few To Judge
European Starling	9(5)	.	.	.
Common Grackle	6(2)	.	.	3
Pine Siskin	9(6)	.	.	.
Red-headed Woodpecker	.	.	5(3)	4
Red-bellied Woodpecker	.	.	9(7)	.
Downy Woodpecker	.	1	8(2)	.
Hairy Woodpecker	.	3	6(3)	.
Blue Jay	1	1	7(2)	.
Black-capped Chickadee	.	1	8(1)	.
Tufted Titmouse	.	.	4(4)	5
White-breasted Nuthatch	.	2	7(5)	.

\* number of regions where frequency difference was significant,  $p < 0.05$

Most species were either mostly rural, mostly urban or neutral. That is, if they were a rural species, they are rural in all regions. Mourning Doves are one of the exceptions. They were found at significantly more urban feeders in East Central Iowa, while in the South West and South Central regions they were found more often at rural feeders.

Three species were mostly urban: European Starling, Common Grackle, and Pine Siskin. Of these, the distribution of Pine Siskins was the most dramatic. In the Central region, siskins were found at 21.3 percent of the urban feeders compared with 5.1 percent of the rural feeders. They were also found more often at urban feeders in the North East region (24.6 percent vs. 15.1 percent), but this difference was not significant.

Eight species were found more often at rural feeders. Four of these are woodpeckers: Red-headed, Red-bellied, Downy, and Hairy. The other four species are Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, and White-breasted Nuthatch. Red-bellied Woodpecker is the most dramatic rural species. In Central Iowa they were seen at only 20.1 percent of the urban feeders compared with 50.0 percent of the rural feeders.

Where there are sufficient feeders to make comparisons, rural feeders almost always have more of a given species than urban feeders. In Central Iowa, where there were a large number of reports at both urban (164) and rural (78) feeders, 34 species could be analyzed. Twenty species had higher means at rural feeders. For ten species, the higher means were significant ( $p < 0.05$ ): Red-bellied-, Downy-, and Hairy Woodpeckers, Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Northern Cardinal, American Tree Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, and American Goldfinch. Eight species had higher urban means in Central Iowa: Mourning Dove, Northern Flicker, American Crow, European Starling, White-crowned Sparrow, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, and Pine Siskin. The differences were only significant for Common Grackle and Pine Siskin.

## DISCUSSION

Whether the changes noted in species numbers represents year to year fluctuation or long term change must await additional surveys. The changes in most of the species should not be viewed as surprising, since Red-headed Woodpeckers, Red-breasted Nuthatches, American Robins, Cedar Waxwings, American Tree Spar-

rows, Purple Finches, Pine Siskins, and Evening Grosbeaks are species known to fluctuate from year to year. Both Cedar Waxwings and Purple Finches were found at lower birds per feeder and at a lower percentage of feeders in 1985. It is possible that the apparent decline in such cavity nesters as Red-bellied Woodpecker and White-breasted Nuthatch is due to the continuing decline of woodlands in Iowa. This is probably not the case as another cavity nester, the Tufted Titmouse, did not decline. Also, estimates of the reduction in forest acreage range from 0.25 percent to 0.50 percent per year (Dave Newhouse, personal communication), and the observed decline is greater than this.

The declines are not nearly as dramatic as one would expect when reading the individual comments of many reports. Not everyone made comments, but all of them were negative. People in Dallas Center said this was the "worst year for feeding birds in thirty years." In Washington, some said they had the "fewest birds in the last ten years." Everywhere in the state the summaries read "lousy year," "tons of birds . . . until this winter," "disappointing year," and "not near the number of gold and purple finches as last year." Although the numbers are down this year, both American Goldfinches and Purple Finches were still present at 70 to 80 percent of their 1984 means. This does not seem as extreme as our reporters suggest when they attempt to use words to describe the changing populations. These discrepancies point out the importance of counting the birds and keeping permanent records.

Several factors could account for the fact that some species were found more often in urban areas. Urban areas, especially large towns have a moderating effect on low temperatures. The concentration of feeders may also be higher. For Pine Siskins, especially, the fact that urban Iowa contains more evergreens (especially at cemeteries) could be a contributing factor. Once attracted to feeders, urban birds may remain longer into the winter than rural birds.

Interestingly, of all the species with higher rural frequency, the Blue Jay is the only one that is not a cavity nester and that does not get much of its food by foraging along trees. One normally thinks of rural Iowa as open fields. This may mean that the rural feeders in this survey are found more in woodlots and forested areas than would be true if they had been randomly placed in rural Iowa. Another contributing factor may be that rural residents keep their trees in a more natural manner, with less removal of dead limbs and trees than their urban counterparts.

Species such as Dark-eyed Junco and American Tree Sparrow are often considered rural birds, but in this study neither were found at a higher percentage of rural feeders. The mean number of juncos at rural feeders was significantly higher in five regions (North East, Central, East Central, South Central and South East); American Tree Sparrows were only found in significantly higher numbers only in the Central region.

Numerical trends between 1984 and 1985 as determined by the feeder survey were similar to trends noted on Christmas Bird Counts (Silcock 1985b) and Field Reports (Silcock 1985a), but there were a few exceptions. The feeder survey found that siskins were up, and so did both the field reports and the Christmas Census ("11 year high"). The Field Reports said little about Harris' Sparrows, except to note one record somewhat east of this species normal range. The feeder survey data suggest that this species was found more often everywhere in the state. That is, the increase was not limited to western Iowa. Christmas Counts suggest that pheasants were down, but the feeder survey shows them up slightly. The less than 200 pheasants counted at feeders represents only a very small fraction of Iowa's pheasants. One must use a great deal of caution in using feeder survey data for birds which are only rarely seen

at feeders. The Conservation Commission brood survey in August 1985 (their closest survey to the Feeder Survey), found pheasants to be slightly up from 1984 (Tim Thompson, personal communication). Only one species surveyed, Cedar Waxwing, gave strongly conflicting results. Both the Christmas Census and the Field Reports data suggest that this species was up, while the feeder survey says it was down. The differences are likely due to differences in the methods of study and to the fact that Cedar Waxwings are at their lowest winter numbers in January. They can still be found in numbers at the time of Christmas Bird Counts, and Field Reports may reflect populations in December and February. Feeder surveys may miss them due to low numbers in January or because they are not attracted to feeders.

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*Christmas Bird Count, below Coralville Reservoir dam, 21 December 1985. Photo by T. H. Kent.*

# CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 1985

W. ROSS SILCOCK

The most noticeable change in this year's report compared to previous years is the arrangement of the counts by region (Tables 1 and 2). This arrangement allows comparison of species numbers among and within regions and demonstrates the non-uniform distribution of some species (Table 2). Data on the various counts (date, number of birds, observers, parties, hours, miles, and weather) are compared in Table 1. A new high of 42 locations reported this year including all of the 40 that reported last year and two new ones, Keokuk and Boone County. We welcome the newcomers. The map shows the 42 count circles drawn to scale, indicating how much of the state is now covered. If you live in a gap, consider starting a new count.



The results of the various counts will be discussed first. This will be followed by an analysis of trends for the more regularly occurring species, including comments on species that are not uniformly distributed. The remainder of the report will deal with uncommon species (those seen on three or fewer counts), birds unidentified to species, and rare birds that were inadequately substantiated or referred to the Records Committee. The 657 participants are listed at the end of the report.

## COUNT RESULTS BY REGION

It is interesting to highlight the best counts by region. In the Mississippi Valley, Davenport with 77 species topped the region and the state. As might be expected, Davenport also topped the state in miles covered and observers, although Omaha and Cedar Rapids had more party-hours. The most birds in the region were at Keokuk owing to the presence of 25,000 crows.

In the Missouri Valley, DeSoto NWR came out ahead with 56 species, and also recorded the most birds of any count: 32,955. It helped to have 25,321 Mallards, the only large concentration in the state this year. The Omaha count had the third most observers with 34, but lacked feeder time, as did all Missouri Valley counts.

In the Northern Third, Decorah had an excellent count with 48 species, as did Spirit Lake and Cherokee, with 38 and 41 respectively. The latter two counts had more feeder time than Decorah, and had good numbers of birds and observers. Only Swaledale in the Northern Third had more than 20 feeder hours, but their low total of 20 species was probably due to the low number of hours (5) spent in the field.

The Middle Third had the most count locations. Iowa City had the most species (63), tying the record for that location. Iowa City also had the most observers in the state (37), but feeder hours were minimal. Contrast this with Cedar Rapids, where 29 parties spent 44 hours watching feeders, helping bring the Cedar Rapids total (59) close to that of Iowa City. Both counts are well-organized, with many experienced observers. Cedar Falls found a remarkable 55 species with only 5 observers, 24 party-hours, and no feeder-hours. They obviously planned their time well. Boone County did very well for a new count, finding 46 species. The large number of observers for a new count (33) and the good number of feeder-hours obviously helped.

In the Southern Third, Rathbun was a clear winner, with 60 species. The 24

feeder-hours helped, as did the experienced crew running the count. Lake Red Rock came in with 49 species, although their reporting of count data was incomplete.

## REGULAR SPECIES

The early, severe cold weather in December was associated with sharply decreased numbers of geese, dabbling ducks, and gulls, while some northern species, such as Northern Shrike and Snow Bunting, appeared in record numbers. Raptor trends varied among the species. There was no real showing of winter finches except for Evening Grosbeak, which appeared in record numbers. The bird of the season, a Black-backed Woodpecker at Ottumwa, was also was a northern species. More detail on these general trends follows. Significant departures from the average numbers found in the last ten years will be emphasized, as will species with non-uniform distribution across the state.

Snow and Canada Geese were at a ten-year low. The 66 Snow Geese were all at DeSoto NWR. Several dabbling ducks were at or near ten-year lows. American Wigeon and American Coot missed the list for the first time in ten years. As usual, Mallards were widely distributed across the state, although in low numbers, with 74 percent concentrated at DeSoto NWR. Diving ducks were down too, but the expected species (Common Merganser and Common Goldeneye) appeared in normal numbers. Gulls were also down significantly, with no Ring-billed Gulls for the first time in ten years. Only 58 Herring Gulls appeared, compared with a ten-year average of 1,038.

Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks were at ten-year highs; Goshawks were present in average numbers. Of the buteos, Rough-legged and Red-shouldered Hawks were found in average numbers, while Red-tailed Hawk was at a ten-year high. Bald Eagle was also at a ten-year high. Kestrels were present in average numbers. The high counts for accipiters, red-tails and Bald Eagles are hard to explain.

Wild Turkey continues to be a success story, with a new high of 294 reported. There has been a steady increase from the two seen in 1976. Turkeys were the second most common gallinaceous species behind Ring-necked Pheasant. Northern Bobwhite numbers were slightly below average, Gray Partridge slightly above average.

Eastern Screech-Owl, Great Horned Owl, and Barred Owl were near their ten-year highs, possibly due to better owling efforts. Asking observers to record the number of party-hours spent owling may have reminded people to put in more hours before daybreak and after sunset.

The regional distribution of Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers is interesting. There are about eight times as many Downys as Hairys in Missouri Valley counts, but only about 2 to 4 times as many in the Northern Third and Mississippi Valley. The ratio is intermediate in the Southern Third. Common Flickers were found mainly in the Missouri and Mississippi Valleys: 73 percent were in those two regions, suggesting that these are the major migration corridors or wintering areas for flickers.

Record highs were registered for Horned Lark and Snow Bunting this year. Snow Buntings were at almost seven times their ten-year average, while Horned Larks were about twice their ten-year average; both set ten-year highs by far. Most of the Snow Buntings (92 percent) were in the northern two-thirds of Iowa, in the same location where many were recorded in November. Lapland Longspurs were present in average numbers, suggesting that the many present in northern Iowa in November moved south out of the state while Snow Buntings remained and increased in numbers.

Most of the American Crows were at a roost in Keokuk. Black-capped Chickadees

were at a ten-year high, as were Tufted Titmouse and White-breasted Nuthatch. Chickadees presumably move south into Iowa from further north in severe winters. White-breasted Nuthatches have been steadily increasing over the last ten years, from 721 in 1976 to 2,176 this year. Does this indicate hope for hole-nesters? Tufted Titmouse is also a hole-nester, and interestingly, both it and Northern Cardinal were at or near ten-year highs. Both species have moved into Iowa this century and are apparently doing well.

Eastern Bluebirds were the second-lowest in ten years, probably moving out due to cold weather. The fruit-eaters, American Robin and Cedar Waxwing, were at or near ten-year highs, the former concentrated mainly in the Missouri Valley region, the latter statewide. There was a good wild fruit crop in the Missouri Valley region this year, keeping robins there despite the cold weather. The influx of Cedar Waxwings was statewide, but obviously not accompanied by as many Bohemian Waxwings as last year.

Northern Shrikes were a big story this year: an amazing 40 were found, twice the previous ten-year high, and far above the ten-year average of 13 birds. As expected, 85 percent of the Northern Shrikes were in the northern two-thirds of the state. With many Northern Shrikes in Iowa, one might expect the Loggerheads to have gone south, but their numbers were about normal.

Most of the American Tree Sparrows were in the southeast part of the state: 80 percent were in the Mississippi Valley and southern two-thirds, as were White-throated Sparrows (88 percent). There were only two Song Sparrows and no White-Crowned Sparrows in the Northern Third; both species were in all other regions. Harris' Sparrow, as expected, was concentrated in the Missouri Valley (73 percent), while Swamp Sparrow was most common in the Mississippi Valley region (64 percent). The number of Dark-eyed Juncos was the second-highest in ten years, although not greatly above the ten-year average of 16,911 birds.

Icterids, usually sensitive to cold weather, were generally down, especially Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, and Brown-headed Cowbird. All three were at or near ten-year lows. Meadowlarks, however, were present in average numbers. I sometimes think Meadowlarks just aren't smart enough to leave when it gets cold. Meadowlarks this year showed an interesting distribution across the state—97 percent were found in the Missouri Valley region and southern two-thirds of the state. Surprisingly, Rusty Blackbirds were concentrated in the north and west, with 99 percent in the Missouri Valley region and northern two-thirds. This seems strange for a species which is generally considered to be a migrant in Iowa.

Among the finches, Purple Finch, Pine Siskin, and American Goldfinch were at or near ten-year highs. Common Redpoll was found in slightly above-average numbers, and preferred open country, as most were found away from the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. A major high was reached this year by Evening Grosbeak, with the 408 birds found this year being almost half the total number seen in the last ten years. The ten-year average is only 93 for this erratic species.

## UNCOMMON SPECIES

The list of best birds this year was topped by the three species new to the Iowa Christmas Bird Count, bringing the all-time list to 188. (In the last 16 years, 40 new species have been added to the list.) A Sora at Muscatine is the third rail for the list; Virginia Rail and King Rail have each been recorded once in the past. A Black-backed Woodpecker at Ottumwa, which was well-photographed, was the best find. The third new species was House Finch, with one each at Davenport and Oakville; the Oakville bird was in Illinois.



Table 1. Count Data

Table 1. Count Data																	
Location	Date	Spec.	Totals		Field		Miles		Owl		Feeder		Temp. F		Snow	Wind	Sky
			Birds	Obs.	Pts.	Hr.	Car	Ft.	Hr.	Pts.	Hr.	Pts.	Low	High			
MISSISSIPPI RIVER																	
1. Yellow R.F.	4 Jan	37	1,721	9	4	22	174	8	2	.	.	18	25	18	NW	5-10	cloudy, snowing
2. Dubuque	21 Dec	44	4,423	22	8	58	155	21	.	1	4	3	14	24	SW	4-15	clear to cloudy
3. Clinton	4 Jan	61	9,170	12	4	39	432	10	3	.	.	24	30	8	NE	5-25	rain, sleet, snow
4. Princeton	19 Dec	57	4,227	9	4	24	332	5	3	1	2	-18	11	5	E	2-8	clear
5. Davenport	22 Dec	77	15,600	36	10	80	759	22	7	12	30	24	37	3	SW	5-12	mostly cloudy
6. Muscatine	29 Dec	58	7,648	16	4	37	417	11	3	2	2	10	15	3	W	5-12	clear
7. Oakville	2 Jan	62	10,894	14	5	46	460	15	5	.	.	30	42	2	SW	6-12	partly cloudy, sleet
8. Burlington	21 Dec	58	6,302	12	4	34	124	38	1	3	12	-9	15	3	NE	10-15	clear, partly cloudy
9. Keokuk	28 Dec	55	31,251	15	6	36	274	9	2	1	2	15	20	1	NE	6-10	clear, partly cloudy
MISSOURI RIVER																	
10. Sioux City	21 Dec	46	5,012	20	5	32	80	40	3	4	2	13	25	7	NW	10	
11. DeSoto MWR	4 Jan	56	32,955	27	6	48	397	14	.	.	.	20	32	0	NW	25-30	mostly clear
12. Omaha NE	28 Dec	48	10,852	34	11	86	538	43	3	2	3	12	37	1	SE	5-10	mostly clear
13. Shenandoah	21 Dec	43	6,226	7	3	28	235	7	1	1	8	26	30	6	SW	3-10	
14. Tristate	22 Dec	46	3,969	9	2	18	166	2	1	1	4			7	NW	0-15	
NORTHERN THIRD																	
15. Decorah	28 Dec	48	3,947	10	4	32	260	10	2	1	1	-9	15	18	NW	5-15	clear, cloudy, snow
16. Waterloo	21 Dec	36	4,513	6	3	25	265	9	.	.	.	-21	11	21	SW	0-5	
17. Mason City	5 Jan	33	3,738	13	6	?	251	6	.	2	14	0	20	9	NW	5-15	clear
18. Swaledale	28 Dec	20	514	7	3	5	51	1	.	4	21	0	25	10	W	10-20	clear, cloudy, snow
19. Spirit Lake	21 Dec	38	7,894	16	7	50	509	30	.	20	16	3	29	15	SW	8-10	fog late
20. Cherokee	22 Dec	41	6,960	18	5	40	293	4	1	4	11	23	38	14	SW	10-20	partly cloudy
21. Westfield	5 Jan	27	1,459	4	3	18	112	14	1	1	2	4	30	12	NW	0-15	clear
MIDDLE THIRD																	
22. Lost Nation	18 Dec	43	4,900	16	4	33	362	7	1	.	.	-15	0	+	NW	10-15	clear
23. North Linn	28 Dec	47	4,047	17	8	54	458	18	3	2	14	-9	16	9	NW	5-20	clear, cloudy, snow
24. Cedar Rapids	21 Dec	59	6,675	28	11	101	496	47	4	29	44	-18	10	9	SW	0-10	clear to cloudy
25. Iowa City	21 Dec	63	7,546	37	9	61	368	24	3	5	6	-12	18	7	SW	5-15	clear to cloudy
26. Amara	5 Jan	30	716	6	1	7	60	4	.	.	.	10	20	10	NW	5-15	clear
27. Cedar Falls	22 Dec	55	6,963	5	3	24	264	10	.	.	.	25	32	21	NW	5-15	mostly cloudy
28. Marshalltown	21 Dec	41	3,835	26	6	59	280	.	.	5	12	-12	15	10	E	5	cloudy
29. Eldora	29 Dec	38	2,608	12	4	30	267	10	.	4	8	-2	20	4	NW	5-10	clear
30. Ames	21 Dec	53	8,372	29	8	67	302	32	1	8	20	-5	20	16	0		
31. Alleman	29 Dec	30	1,080	3	1	6	80	1	.	1	4	0	20	10	W	15	
32. Des Moines	4 Jan	42	2,609	14	6	41	368	19	1	2	12	20	29	4	NW	25-30	snowing
33. Boone County	1 Jan	46	6,521	33	11	65	385	43	4	3	12	12	37	8	SE	0-5	
34. Lehigh	4 Jan	17	590	10	1	4	10	4	.	5	16	28	32	+	N	20	
35. Fort Dodge	28 Dec	29	1,458	15	5	12	8	3	1	9	32	10	15	+	?	10	clear to cloudy
36. Jamaica	24 Dec	52	4,846	6	3	9	224	8	4	2	14	33	37	8	SW	10-20	cloudy
37. Sac County	21 Dec	30	2,148	18	5	47	150	23	.	3	8	9	27	13	SW	5	partly cloudy
SOUTHERN THIRD																	
38. Ottumwa	28 Dec	33	1,805	8	3	20	132	12	.	.	.	10	20	4	NW	10-20	cloudy
39. Oskaloosa	27 Dec	34	1,796	2	1	8	95	1	.	4	8	12	25	+	NW	6	mostly clear
40. Rathbun	21 Dec	60	5,969	24	6	50	300	8	2	8	24	5	20	8	S	0-5	cloudy
41. Red Rock	22 Dec	49	5,290	23	8	?	?	?	.	4	?	30	40	9	SW	5-20	clear
42. Lamoni	28 Dec	32	1,879	9	4	29	166	6	1	1	2	20	30	3	SW	10	cloudy to clear
TOTAL			260,927 658														

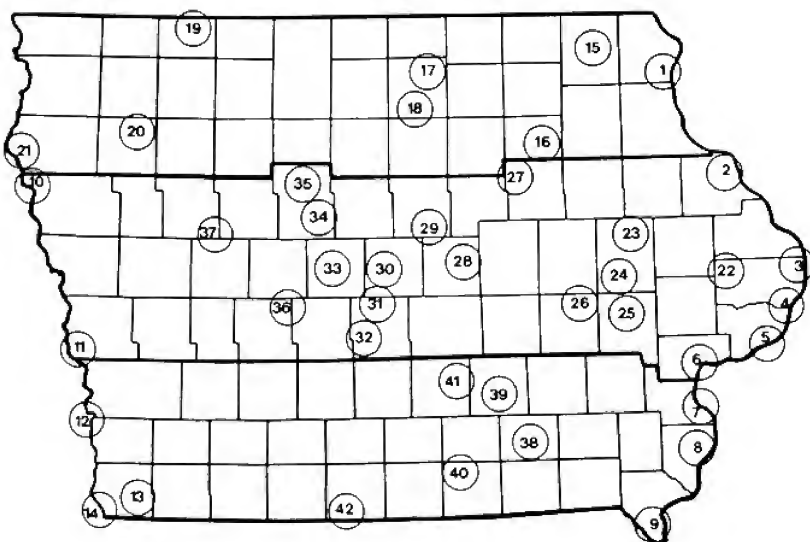






Table 2. Christmas Bird Count Data 1985 (cont.)

	Ba	Lo	Sh	Be	Re	Re	Te	Do	Mo	Mo	Pl	Mo	La	Ja	Am	Bl	Tu	Re	Wh	Br	Vi	Co	Ea	Am	Ce	Mo	Lo	
	Ow	Ea	Ki	He	Be	He	Mo	Se	He	Be	He	Fl	Mo	La	Ja	Am	Bl	Tu	Re	Wh	Br	Vi	Co	Ea	Am	Ce	Mo	Lo
	Ow	Ow	Ow	Ow	Ow	Ow	Ow	Ow	Ow	Ow	Ow	Ow	Ow	Ow	Ow	Ow	Ow	Ow	Ow	Ow	Ow	Ow	Ow	Ow	Ow	Ow	Ow	Ow
MISSISSIPPI RIVER																												
Yellow R.F.	1			2	9	22		14	10		2	71	120	39	69	4		23								2		
Dubuque	1			4	11	36		99	26		9	3	40	200	206	307	76	1	136	2					173	112		
Clinton	7			2	6	47	2	64	19	18	1	636	263	235	271	17	3	72	26	2	9				23	186		
Princeton	1				4	16	2	67	20	13		306	148	209	123	6		52	3		1			31	7	1		
Davenport	4				4	34	36		125	25	20	3	437	310	631	495	72	9	130	7		7			21	3		
Muscatine	5	1		2	25	44	1	59	7	23	4	166	211	177	209	45	4	84	9	1		6	212	70			3	
Oakville	10			4	19	56	1	100	30	18	11	358	216	2631	185	21	1	65	21		9	6	81	74				
Burlington	7			4	6	31		68	13	17	3	344	165	509	191	39	7	32	6	2	3		12	224				
Keokuk	2			1	15	33	1	51	16	16	2	10	183	25000	197	54	2	36	5	1			1	5				
subtotal	37	3		23	129	323	7	627	166	134	29	2368	1816	29637	2047	334	27	630	79	6	30	12	556	681	3	3		
MISSOURI RIVER																												
Sioux City				1		6		33	13	19		231	83	65	294		2	114	11		2		4	21	1			
Desoto NWR			3		2	29		52	6	105		195	86	79	178		1	39	3		1	5	511	30	1			
Omaha, NE	1			122	64		125	8	143		105	301	132	569	43	1	127	6	1				1307	115	1			
Shenandoah	1				9		28	4	15		591	128	2	34		2	16	6					369	145			1	
Tristate	2			1	12	10	2	25	1	27		9	94	34	21	4		9	2		3		271	201				
subtotal	4		3	2	136	118	2	263	32	309		1131	692	312	1116	47	6	305	28	1	6	5	2462	512	3	1		
NORTHERN THIRD																												
Decorah	1			5	36	56		28	13	5	3	6	300	271	171	9	7	69	2					3	323	4		
Waterloo	3				1	4		25	6	1		72	75	175	113			32						27	133		1	
Mason City					4			27	10	1		90	82	101	124		1	44	1				2					
Swaledale													11	12	7			4										
Spirit Lake					4			75	31	11		609	100	85	362		5	103	15				1	17	4	1		
Cherokee					2	10	1	31	9	26		754	117	166	112		2	38						26	4			
Westfield	3					7		16	9	7		102	29	12	139			29					2		4			
subtotal	7			5	39	86	1	206	81	51	3	1633	714	822	1028		9	15	319	18			8	378	20	1		
MIDDLE THIRD																												
Lost Nation	7			1	4	22		36	16	7		432	109	201	147	14	1	26			2		12	32				
North Linn	6	1		3	32	39		58	16	5	2	50	150	121	163	24	2	62	1				27	133			1	
Cedar Rapids	2			5	19	33		41	22	7		105	179	762	438	46	2	123	2		1		20	100	1	1		
Iowa City	3	1		2	21	40		60	9	16	1	83	206	174	302	37	3	75	7		4		12	161	3			
Adams			1		7	4		4	1	6	1	12	42	30	85			12	1				38					
Cedar Falls	2	2	1	1	4	17		51	13	2	1	270	85	196	199	1	2	64	1					17	5			
Marshalltown	2				4	11		67	20			564	114	171	93	7	2	41					7	116		1		
Eldora	1				7	6		21	5	3		14	81	155	74	2	2	45						8				
Ames	1	2	3		4	25		45	13	9		451	162	300	264	4	8	79	1		1	1	8	43	1			
Altoona	1				2	6		15	5	6		23	62	35	4			14									2	
Des Moines	3	1			1	10		25	4	5		137	77	411	224	17	3	17	3				11	150				
Boone Co.	5	1			46	52		84	31	12		44	317	278	352	32	1	130					3	36	2			
Lehigh					8	10		12	12				22	10	65			19					3					
Fort Dodge					4	5		19	7	1		6	76	182	65			37				1	1					
Jamaica	1		1	1	29	9	1	23	3	6		275	95	97	87	2		23					12	14	2			
Sac Co.					2	5		17	3	6		496	93	77	91			36	5				1					
subtotal	34	8	6	13	194	294	1	578	180	91	5	2939	1831	3227	2684	190	26	803	21		9	1	152	813	14	5		
SOUTHERN THIRD																												
Ottumwa					1	4		5	2	1		15	66	69	22	6											1	
Oakaloosa	1				4	2		15	2	5		163	34	64	16	1	1	2	1								1	
Rathbun	4		3	1	6	37		33	12	13		163	323	277	217	28	2	50			3		66		3			
Red Rock	1			1		12		34	7	3		210	72	520	64	9	1	32	1		1		7	22				
Lamoni					17	13		30	3	3		24	173	16	99	2		35									1	
subtotal	6		3	2	28	68		117	23	25		575	668	946	418	46	4	119	2		4		7	88			6	
TOTAL	88	11	12	45	526	889	11	1791	482	610	37	8646	5721	34944	7293	626	78	2176	148	7	49	18	3185	2472	40	16		
Barned Owl																												
Red-bellied W.																												
Pileated Woodpecker																												
Long-eared Owl																												
Yellow-bellied Saps.																												
Horned Lark																												
Short-eared Owl																												
Downy Woodpecker																												
Blue Jay																												
Belted Kingfisher																												
Red-headed W.																												
N. Flicker																												
Am. Crow																												
Black-capped Chickadee																												
Winter Wren																												
N. Shrike																												

Osprey: Oakville (1, in Illinois).

Accipiter sp.: Iowa City (1), Red Rock (1).

Buteo sp.: Dubuque (2); Omaha, NE (3); Cedar Rapids (1); Eldora (1);

Marshalltown (1); Rathbun (1).

Merlin: Dubuque (1); Shenandoah (1); Rathbun (1).

Prairie Falcon: Desoto NWR (1); Tristate (1).

Ruffed Grouse: Yellow R.F. (2); Decorah (2).

Sora: Muscatine (1).

Killdeer: Clinton (1); Princeton (1).

Glaucous Gull: Davenport (3).

Snowy Owl: Swaledale (1); Rathbun (1).

Northern Saw-whet Owl: Burlington (1); Boone Co. (2).

Black-backed Woodpecker: Ottumwa (1).

Carolina Wren: Keokuk (3); Iowa City (1).

Townsend's Solitaire: Decorah (1).

Hermit Thrush: Princeton (1); Davenport (1); Ames (1).

Varied Thrush: Des Moines (1).

Table 2. Christmas Bird Count Data 1985 (continued)

	Eu St	No Ce	Am Tr	Fi Sp	So Sp	Sw Sp	Wh Th	He Cr	Da Sp	La Ju	Sn Lo	Re Bu	Me Wi	Ru Bl	Br Bl	Co Gr	Br He	Pu Fi	Co Re	Pi Si	Am Go	Ev Gr	Ho Sp		
MISSISSIPPI RIVER																									
Yellow R.F.	201	143	30	-	-	-	-	-	181	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	19	-	451		
Dubuque	338	330	32	-	11	-	1	1	535	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	16	-	203	115	-	908		
Clinton	691	336	1186	-	36	5	2	1	1548	36	384	34	-	1	-	3	40	30	-	25	166	4	1786		
Princeton	355	174	542	-	4	1	-	2	732	1	24	1	7	-	-	9	1	5	-	2	48	-	1053		
Davenport	2131	692	1042	1	53	4	23	6	1517	4	1	106	1	1	-	34	1	23	3	121	259	20	2784		
Muscatine	964	345	762	-	11	1	2	4	783	-	251	71	-	-	-	2	2	30	1	92	117	4	2424		
Oakville	2123	301	1380	-	28	7	1	1	755	70	1	129	-	-	2	-	-	53	-	5	83	12	1490		
Burlington	497	362	370	-	18	-	2	1	781	23	7	1	-	-	-	3	7	58	-	211	425	9	1079		
Keokuk	1402	208	162	-	1	13	-	-	583	-	-	-	-	-	-	13	3	61	-	76	684	66	1233		
subtotal	8702	2891	5506	1	174	18	37	16	7415	134	668	356	6	2	2	64	54	278	4	735	1916	115	13208		
MISSOURI RIVER																									
Sioux City	1000	42	358	-	3	-	-	-	6	371	-	-	478	-	1	-	1	33	-	7	48	5	162		
Desoto NWR	1133	83	997	-	9	-	3	-	42	679	300	-	241	2	44	-	1	1	9	-	13	45	-	1843	
Omaha, NE	3374	158	187	-	3	-	1	-	15	483	-	-	32	-	-	-	348	1	21	-	235	134	-	2285	
Shenandoah	495	109	233	-	14	1	-	2	37	324	-	-	31	104	8	-	4	-	30	-	43	47	-	3036	
Tristate	779	80	48	-	3	-	2	11	48	185	-	-	17	56	15	-	-	9	-	117	12	-	1560		
subtotal	6781	472	1823	-	32	1	6	13	148	2042	300	-	799	147	68	-	354	2	102	-	415	286	5	8886	
NORTHERN THIRD																									
Decorah	343	165	51	-	-	-	-	-	-	280	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	45	1	5	203	9	1211		
Waterloo	391	157	322	-	-	-	1	-	-	703	11	1236	3	1	37	-	5	5	-	-	49	-	958		
Mason City	218	30	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	175	20	72	2	-	-	-	-	19	-	4	16	15	1816		
Swaledale	35	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	51	-	33	-	1	-	-	11	1	-	-	21	-	216		
Spirit Lake	1020	2	84	-	-	-	-	-	1	191	1	2120	1	-	1	-	-	100	171	58	124	17	2283		
Cherokee	862	41	261	-	-	-	2	-	13	589	67	860	2	18	25	-	1	1	38	1	19	192	18	2093	
Westfield	408	5	239	-	-	-	-	-	8	135	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	22	-	212		
subtotal	3257	400	966	-	2	-	3	-	22	2124	99	4341	8	2	63	-	19	7	202	173	86	627	59	8789	
MIDDLE THIRD																									
Lost Nation	552	258	484	-	14	1	1	1	-	734	1	178	-	-	-	-	-	26	-	-	26	1	1316		
North Linn	365	293	131	-	1	-	2	-	-	623	-	201	1	6	2	8	-	51	7	2	92	16	1039		
Cedar Rapids	320	719	134	-	1	8	1	-	-	964	1	2	-	4	-	1	10	5	64	-	45	288	13	1006	
Iowa City	249	407	1773	3	11	7	14	26	-	1680	-	1	17	2	8	-	2	-	79	-	89	153	8	1618	
Amama	40	60	22	-	-	-	-	-	-	90	-	-	25	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	50	3	125		
Cedar Falls	591	157	487	-	2	-	1	-	-	557	70	2015	1	1	10	-	10	2	24	-	44	63	-	1451	
Marshalltown	253	168	151	-	-	-	1	-	5	562	15	163	-	4	-	-	1	1	41	-	33	135	9	734	
Eldora	290	124	28	-	1	-	-	-	-	233	3	-	-	2	-	2	-	40	-	17	111	25	1052		
Ames	953	204	102	-	6	-	1	-	4	618	11	738	5	10	22	-	10	24	57	36	105	25	3683		
Alleman	205	44	13	-	1	-	-	-	1	77	-	1	-	1	1	-	-	3	-	-	2	16	-	525	
Des Moines	277	130	33	-	2	2	-	2	-	260	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	29	-	77	98	7	504		
Boone Co.	670	259	470	-	30	-	2	-	18	961	19	-	5	3	-	6	-	125	-	36	332	7	1812		
Lehigh	20	16	56	-	-	-	-	-	-	62	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	191	52	31		
Fort Dodge	72	55	23	-	-	-	-	-	-	227	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	11	38	14	514		
Jamaica	475	92	428	-	11	-	-	-	1	567	95	160	6	7	-	-	1	38	3	6	86	1	662		
Sac Co.	209	29	40	-	-	-	-	-	-	125	24	195	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	19	-	356		
subtotal	5611	3015	4375	3	3	87	9	25	27	29	8340	244	3656	60	38	43	15	37	33	550	67	398	1803	181	16428
SOUTHERN THIRD																									
Ottumwa	189	22	214	-	-	-	-	-	-	308	-	-	-	6	-	-	4	-	77	-	4	29	28	318	
Oskaloosa	331	85	75	1	-	-	-	-	-	284	-	-	-	16	-	-	-	10	-	-	37	2	525		
Rathbun	293	209	947	4	1	9	-	1	21	853	3	4	1	13	-	-	1	1	87	-	16	219	18	1619	
Red Rock	220	80	166	-	3	-	1	10	4	722	1	4	2	12	-	3	-	21	-	23	118	-	725		
Lamoni	281	19	178	-	-	-	-	-	-	98	-	-	-	4	-	-	1	-	8	-	-	17	-	720	
subtotal	1314	415	1580	5	1	13	-	2	31	4	2265	4	8	3	39	-	-	9	1	203	-	43	420	48	3907
TOTAL																									
25665	7193	14250	9	5	308	28	73	87	203	22186	781	8673	1226	232	176	17	483	97	1335	244	1677	5052	408	51218	
European Starling      Song Sparrow      Dark-eyed Junco      Rusty Blackbird      Common Redpoll      House W. Cardinal      Swamp Sparrow      Lapland Longspur      Brewer's Blackbird      Pine Siskin      Sparrow																									
Am. Tree Sparrow      White-throated Sp.      Snow Bunting      Common Grackle      Am. Goldfinch																									
Field Sparrow      White-crowned Sparrow      Red-winged Blackbird      Brown-headed Cowbird      Evening Fox Sparrow      Harris' Sparrow      Meadowlark Sp.      Purple Finch      Grosbeak																									
* Includes Western Meadowlark at Princeton (1); Davenport (1); Shenandoah (8); Tristate (7); Cherokee (18); Westfield (4); Marshalltown (42); and Red Rock (12).																									

\* Includes Western Meadowlark at Princeton (1); Davenport (1); Shenandoah (8); Tristate (7); Cherokee (18); Westfield (4); Marshalltown (4); and Red Rock (12).

Northern Mockingbird: Rathbun (1); Lamoni (3).

Brown Thrasher: Princeton (1); Iowa City (1); Jamaica (1).

Bohemian Waxwing: Iowa City (1).

Shrike sp.: Boone County (1).

Rufous-sided Towhee: Davenport (1); DeSoto NWR (1); Fort Dodge (1).

Lincoln's Sparrow: Oakville (1); Sioux City (1).

Yellow-headed Blackbird: Sioux City (1).

Blackbird sp.: Omaha (29); Spirit Lake (1).

Pine Grosbeak: Cedar Falls (1).

House Finch: Davenport (1); Oakville (1, in Illinois).

Red Crossbill: Cedar Falls (3).

Eurasian Tree Sparrow: Keokuk (1, in Illinois).

Three other species belong on the list of best birds: a Mute Swan at Cedar Rapids; an Osprey at Oakville; and a European Tree Sparrow at Keokuk. The Mute Swan was carefully reported as Swan species, but was later identified as a Mute Swan by Tom Kent, who "woke it up to get its picture." I have doubts about its wildness. There were two Ospreys reported, but only the Oakville bird, which was seen in Illinois, was acceptably documented. The Eurasian Tree Sparrow on the Keokuk count was also in Illinois. It is only a matter of time before one will be found in Iowa.

As is the case every year, there were a few notable misses. Two species seen the last nine years were missed this year: American Wigeon and Ring-billed Gull. These appear to be casualties of the cold weather that preceded the count period. A third notable miss was Ruby-crowned Kinglet, which had been seen in eight of the previous nine years. There are about 30 species which have never been missed on an Iowa Christmas Count, which means that if you do not get at least 25 species on your count, you probably did not stay out long enough.

### BIRDS INADEQUATELY SUBSTANTIATED OR PENDING REVIEW

There were a large number of documentations sent in, which is great. Most were well done, but a few were not. Perhaps the most common fault was the failure to unequivocally eliminate similar species. Many of the descriptions of birds seemed adequate on their own, but on closer inspection had to be discarded because of vagaries of viewing conditions, delay in writing descriptions, and failure to state how similar species were eliminated.

There are three problem groups of birds that I have decided to treat a little differently in the future. All reports of accipiters, shrikes, and meadowlarks will be listed as "sp." unless brief details are included to identify them. Many compilers already do this. A single sentence is often sufficient to give the identifying marks that were seen. Also, I will place certain species on a separate list to indicate that details or documentation are required. Examples are Merlin and Brewer's Blackbird. The problem is that we in Iowa may accept certain species without details, but then they are not accepted when reviewed for publication in *American Birds*, owing to lack of substantiation. Providing brief details is simple and takes little time.

Five species were dropped from this year's list and one is pending review by the Records Committee; some of the reports of two other species were rejected. A reported Golden Eagle was incompletely described. It was "the same general shape as the Bald Eagles" it was with, and was hunting over ice on the Mississippi. Both these facts are more suggestive of an immature Bald Eagle. Shape is often used to separate these two eagle species. The only field mark reported that was suggestive of Golden Eagle was a "dark tail band". The highly variable immature Bald Eagle may show this pattern. Identification requires more than one field mark to be conclusive. A Peregrine Falcon was dropped because the description did not eliminate Prairie Falcon. The axillars were not observed; and the brown back, suggestive of an immature, was inconsistent with the dark cap and white bib which are suggestive of an adult. Two Swainson's Thrushes were reported, both in Illinois. Both descriptions were fair, but neither specifically and unequivocally stated why they might not have been Hermit Thrushes. Many winter reports of Swainson's Thrush have been found to be Hermit Thrushes. A Wood Thrush was also reported. This would be an incredible winter record, even at a feeder (which this bird was not). The description reads well, but again the possibility of Hermit Thrush (or even Brown Thrasher) was not dealt with. The fifth species eliminated was Eastern Meadowlark. I was most sympathetic to this report, as the observer was aware of its significance, and carefully

studied the three birds. The cheeks were described as "whitish" with yellow confined to the throat only. This is a good description as it stands, but I have two problems with it. First, and most important, the call note was not heard. Second, meadowlarks molt in fall, and so have fresh plumage at Christmas time. The yellow cheek feathers of Western Meadowlarks often have buffy edges that mask the yellow and can appear white.

A report of Iceland Gull was referred to the Records Committee.

Two further species were adequately documented at one location, but not at others. Three Tundra Swans were reported, but the only description that specifically and convincingly eliminated Trumpeter Swan was of the bird at Yellow River Forest. Trumpeter was eliminated in the Davenport report because "it has not been spotted in this area" (not true), and at DeSoto NWR because the bird was "slimmer and trimmer than a Trumpeter" and had "a yellow line on its bill" (this latter was not in fact seen on the day of the count, but was seen on at least one of the four swans which had "been at DeSoto all fall"). The Davenport and DeSoto birds were counted as Swan sp. One of two Ospreys reported lacked mention of key field marks. The description, based mainly on underwing pattern, suggested a Rough-legged Hawk to me.

This year, all reports of Merlin and Brewer's Blackbird were accepted, but will have to be briefly detailed next year.

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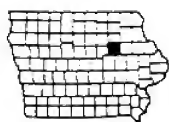


*Grove where Black-backed Woodpecker was found on Ottumwa Christmas Count. Photo by T. H. Kent.*



## SAGE THRASHER IN WATERLOO

FRANCIS L. MOORE



I received a call about a Sage Thrasher in Waterloo at 5:10 p.m. on 23 September 1985. Russell Hays was calling from the Boating Center at Cedar River Park close to the Iowa Public Service power plant near downtown Waterloo. I grabbed my binoculars, telescope, and camera and hurried out the door in order to get a look at the bird before dark.

Tom Stone Jr. had been walking along the flood control dike on the north side of the Cedar River that goes from the power plant to Cedar River Park, when he flushed a bird at the edge of the rip-rap at the east end of the park. He followed it to the Boating Center and got a good look at it. He identified it as a Sage Thrasher and went to get his dad, Tom Stone Sr., and Russell Hays. I arrived within 15 minutes of Russell's call, in time to see the bird before dark.

The bird (see Front Cover) was similar in color to a Water Pipit with medium-dark gray back, streaked breast, and buffy flanks. The wings and tail were a little more brownish-gray than the back and top of the head. The face was lighter with an eye ring broken at the rear and with a darker auricular area below and behind the eye. The bill and feet were black. The upper tail coverts were the same color as the back. The throat was white with a distinct malar streak on each side. The breast was white with heavy black streaks. The streaks were heaviest on the upper breast, fading to smaller streaks on the lower belly. The white breast faded to buff on the belly and flanks. The undertail coverts were buffy with some dark streaks. The feather edging of the greater and median wing coverts was pale gray. The last three or four rectrices were tipped with white, a feature only noticeable in flight. The light yellow iris did not show up well in subdued light, but was seen well later in bright light. This bird appeared to be in adult plumage with some feather wear.

The bird was wary and usually difficult to approach. It often remained hidden in trees near the Boating Center, but also was seen feeding around the parking lot and lawn near the building. At first the bird did not have use of its right leg; later it recovered. The bird was seen by many birders over the next three weeks, last on 13 October.

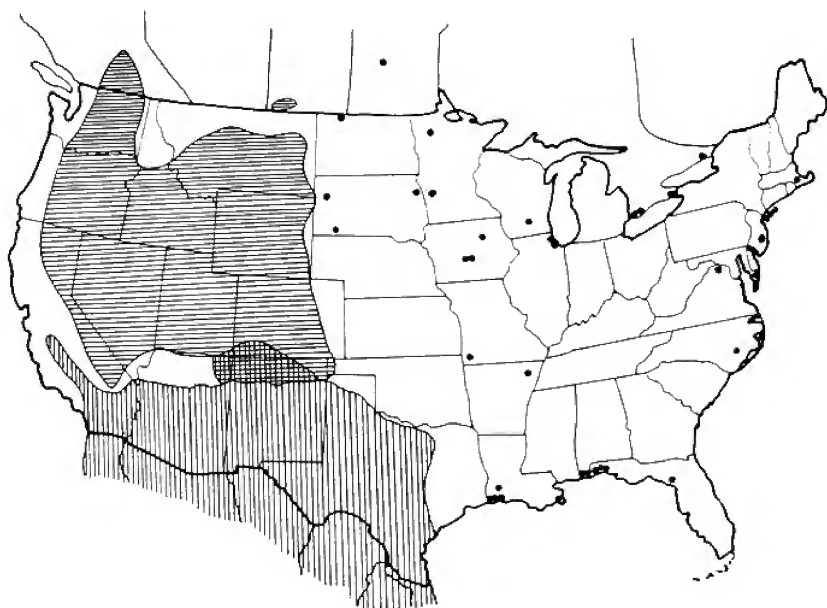
Sage Thrashers breed in arid areas of western United States, where they are said to be common. They occur in dry sagebrush, rabbit-brush, and scrub of the open plains, and in rocky canyons of the foothills west of the Great Plains. In winter they inhabit dense thickets, lowland scrub, and deserts of southwestern United States and Mexico.

Sage Thrashers feed mainly on insects, but also eat small fruits, and sometimes vegetables. On breeding grounds, they are said to be wary, but are tamer when visiting gardens and city parks during migration.

The normal range and location of eastern vagrant records of the Sage Thrasher are shown on the map. (The ranges are a composite from several texts. The vagrant records are from bold-faced entries in *Audubon Field Notes* and *American Birds*, 1950 to 1984, and from books on regional and state birds.)

Records from the western parts of the Great Plains states (North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas and Oklahoma) are close to the eastern edge of the species normal range. Vagrant records are distributed east from the northern part of the breeding range and along the Great Lakes, East Coast, and Gulf Coast. This pattern suggests that vagrants pass through Iowa without stopping, probably due to the lack





*Summer and winter ranges of Sage Thrasher and eastward vagrant records.*

of vagrant traps. There have been only two previous Iowa Records, both in Des Moines in December (Dinsmore et al. 1984). Based on all the eastern vagrant records, future sightings of this species in Iowa would be most likely to occur from October to January. Other western vagrants, such as the Black-headed Grosbeak, show a similar pattern of fall vagrancy. Another vagrant thrasher in Iowa is the Curve-billed Thrasher, a species that has also been reported three times in the state (Newlon 1981). The Curve-billed Thrasher, however, rarely has been found east of Iowa.

The day before the bird was found there was a strong front with high winds of 50–60 mph from the west and northwest. It seems likely that the bird was blown in by this front. It was a matter of luck that a capable birder happened to be in the right spot to find it, and this raises a most interesting question: how many undiscovered vagrants occur in Iowa?

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 Newlon, M. C. 1981. Curve-billed Thrashers in Iowa. Iowa Bird Life. 51:23.

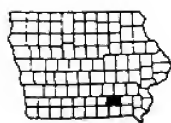
336 Fairfield St., Waterloo, IA 50703



*Black-backed Woodpecker southeast of Ottumwa, 28 December 1985. Photo by Nelson Hoskins.*

## BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKER NEAR OTTUMWA

NELSON R. HOSKINS

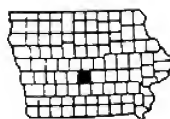


A Black-backed Woodpecker was found at the former YMCA Camp Arrowhead, 3 miles east and 1 mile south of Ottumwa, Wapello County, on 28 December 1985 by Bill and Marge Heusinkveld and later seen by Charles and Darleen Ayres and myself. The bird was in a grove of pine trees, many of which appeared to be diseased and dying. It was active, moving from tree to tree. The back was solid black with heavily barred black and white sides. It had a heavy white line below the eye and yellow cap, indicating that the bird was a male. He ignored us, even when we approached as close as 20 feet. The bird was observed just after noon on a windy, overcast day with temperature near zero. Photos were taken with a 600 mm lens at 1/60th second exposure time.

*508 Shaul Avenue, Ottumwa, IA 52501*

## CLARK'S GREBE AT BIG CREEK STATE PARK

STEVE DINSMORE

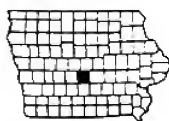


On 12 October 1985, while scanning Big Creek Lake in Polk County, I noticed what appeared to be three Western Grebes. The birds were about one and one-half times as large as several nearby American Coots. The large size, long neck, striking black-and-white coloration, and long thin bills identified the birds as Western or Clark's Grebes. Closer examination revealed that one bird was significantly lighter colored than the other two. It had a lighter back, less extensive darkness on the back of the neck, and a white cheek that included the eye. The dark color on the crown and neck was much grayer than in the other two grebes. I was not able to see the bill color. From these marks, I identified the bird as a Clark's Grebe, formerly the light phase of the Western Grebe. I notified other birders, but the bird could not be found the next morning; however, the next afternoon Francis Moore found a Clark's Grebe above the nearby Saylorville Reservoir dam. This record of Clark's Grebe is the second for Iowa. The other was found on 5 May 1983 (*IBL* 53:48, 54:38).

4024 Arkansas Drive, Ames, IA 50010

## PARASITIC JAEGER AT SAYLORVILLE RESERVOIR

BOB MYERS

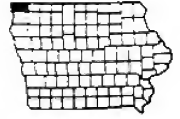


While scoping the Saylorville Reservoir just north of the dam on 14 October 1985, I noticed a dark gull-like bird 300–400 yards out on the water. Even though the bird appeared as not much more than a brown spot, the thought of jaeger raced through my mind. After working my way up the west shore line in order to get a closer view, I could see the overall dark brown coloration, stocky neck, and slightly upturned wing tips of the resting bird. When the bird flew and began to chase Ring-billed Gulls, the overall dark brown color was confirmed, and prominent, flashing white patches were noted at the base of the primaries, both on the upper and lower surfaces. I concluded that the bird was a jaeger; but which one? The tail streamers were not developed, suggesting a juvenile bird. The bird's size—about as large as Ring-billed Gull—and its rapid flight seemed to eliminate the larger and slower Pomarine Jaeger. The large amount of white in the wing, especially on the upper wing, and the un-tern-like flight ruled out Long-tailed Jaeger. I concluded, therefore, that the bird was a juvenile dark phase Parasitic Jaeger. There are four previous substantiated records of Parasitic Jaeger in Iowa (Dinsmore et al., 1984, *Iowa Birds*).

R.R. 2, Box 153, Perry, IA 50220

# BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE IN LYON COUNTY

DOUGLAS C. HARR



Just a few minutes after 2:00 p.m. on 6 October 1985, State Conservation Officer Bill Fribley and I observed and identified an adult Black-billed Magpie in flight at the Lyon County Conservation Board's Hidden Bridge Wildlife Area in western Lyon County. This 154-acre tract, acquired as a public hunting area about five years ago, borders the Big Sioux River and South Dakota six miles west and two miles south of Larchwood, Iowa. The area consists of steeply rolling loess hills which are largely dominated by typical prairie vegetation and cut by several wooded or brushy draws and creek bottoms.

While assisting County Conservation Board Director Paul Hagan assess the prairie habitat, I spotted an apparently crow-sized, black and white bird flying about 40 feet above the ground and 250 to 300 feet northeast of us. I pointed it out to Bill Fribley, and we simultaneously identified it aloud. I then observed the magpie with binoculars and noted its characteristics. Total time of observation was about one minute on a bright, clear day, with the sun behind us.

Including its long tail, the bird was almost crow-sized, but somewhat slimmer. Plumage was mostly black with white belly and large, white scapular patches showing as the bird flew. Some white could also be detected on the outer primaries. Its tail, about the length of the body, was seen to be diamond- or wedge-shaped when the bird turned from profile and flew away from us. Its flight pattern resembled that of a Blue Jay flying in open country. Both Bill and I have observed Black-billed Magpies in western states on numerous occasions.

Magpies are at present considered accidental in Iowa (Dinsmore et al., 1984, *Iowa Birds*). There have been only five records since 1972, the last on 1 June 1980 in Sioux County about 13 miles south-southeast of the present sighting.

In late November I received a phone call from a local hunter who reported seeing 4 magpies while he was bow hunting for deer in this same area in mid-November. Although the reporter is not known to me for his bird identification skills, he is usually a careful observer of all wildlife and is familiar with magpies from western South Dakota. He also reported finding two, large, stick nests in a wooded and brushy draw; it was his opinion that these might be magpie nests, and they were certainly in typical magpie habitat.

These sightings deserve further investigation; I hope to pursue them this spring or sooner. The site is quite remote and frequently difficult to reach, especially on foot during a snowy winter.

*P.O. Box 65, Larchwood, IA 51241*